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Public Information: Saskia Funston

7-3272-50-76-12 ext. 416

<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

PRESS RELEASE

Can Tajikistan Compete in the Global Marketplace?

Tajikistan, Dushanbe. Sometimes, even well known firms get started with a little help. In Tajikistan, that help for small and medium-sized enterprises often comes from the Enterprise Development Project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Small and medium businesses are one of the principal driving forces in economic development. In the United States, small and medium businesses account for over half of the Gross Domestic Product. They stimulate private ownership and entrepreneurship, generate employment, diversify economic activity and make a significant contribution to exports and trade. The potential of small and medium-sized enterprises is often not realized due to insufficient management skills and a lack of market focus. USAID's Enterprise Development Project (EDP) helps by providing professional consulting services to small enterprises throughout Tajikistan. It all starts with development of a strategic plan for the company.

Many of the companies assisted have gone on to become leading firms in Tajikistan. With USAID assistance, Babilon Group has gone from a startup company to a leading Internet and cellular service provider in Tajikistan. The Technical Director of Babilon, Bakhtiyor Muminov, stated, "Our cooperation began with assistance from EDP's technical expert Richard Broderick. His suggestions laid the groundwork for the success of Babilon-T. Babilon's growth was possible because of our partnership with EDP."

EDP assistance benefits all sectors of the economy, including health care. Shifo Medical Center is one of very few private medical clinics in Tajikistan. By increasing the scope and quality of available medical services, Shifo hopes to set the standard for improving health care in Tajikistan. However, when an EDP Manager visited the newly opened clinic in June 2004, Shifo was in serious financial crisis. The clinic was providing very limited services and had yet to turn a profit. Deputy Director of Shifo, Gulnora Saburova, has witnessed the changes at the clinic since beginning their cooperation with EDP: "When Shifo first opened, it was chaotic and unorganized. Participation in EDP training seminars and working with EDP consultants helped us to work more systematically. Now, people know about Shifo not only in Dushanbe, but throughout all of Tajikistan."

The Enterprise Development Project also facilitates increased international trade through e-commerce and with the support of trade advisors. The electronic marketplace (www.smetradecenter.net <<http://bisnis-eurasia.org/bye.php?url=http://www.smetradecenter.net/>>) allows Tajik businesses to promote their goods and services and search for business partners throughout the world. To date, EDP trade specialists have facilitated 200 trade deals worth more than 6 million U.S. Dollars for Tajik businesses.

Through the assistance of USAID's Enterprise Development Project, Tajik businesses are increasing management skills, product quality, and ultimately financial gains. These businesses are leading Tajikistan's integration into the global economy, creating new jobs and improving the quality of life for the citizens of Tajikistan. The United States remains committed to helping to build Tajikistan's business sector by equipping Tajik small business managers with the knowledge and skills needed to compete. The United States is confident that Tajikistan will be competitive and successful in today's global marketplace.

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